![Center for National Security Studies — protecting civil liberties and human rights]

Director
Kate Martin

The Center for National Security Studies supports the USA Freedom Act introduced on April 28, 2015

The compromise bill introduced today would implement President Obama's promise in January 2014 to end the NSA's bulk collection of Americans' telephone metadata under section 215/section 501 of the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act. The bill would also restrict collection of such information under national security letter authorities or foreign intelligence pen register/trap and trace authorities. While such limitations are only a first step in restoring constitutional limits on the government's collection of information on Americans, it is a historic step in recalibrating the excessive government surveillance initiated after the attacks of 9/11.

The bill also brings an important and necessary measure of transparency to at least some of the government's foreign intelligence surveillance programs that collect information on Americans. We commend the administration for recognizing that the absolute secrecy concerning the impact of its broad surveillance programs on Americans that it zealously defended pre-Snowden is neither necessary nor wise.   Transparency is critically necessary to enable the American public to understand the scope of national security surveillance and to be able to have a public national debate on its costs and effectiveness.

While supporting this bill, the Center continues to call on the Congress and the administration to ban the intelligence agencies from using a U.S. person identifier to query information collected under section 702 unless there is an outstanding warrant for collection on that person or emergency circumstances. The Center also calls on the Congress to establish a mechanism to systematically examine domestic surveillance authorities as a whole.

For more information, please contact Kate Martin, 202 721 5650, kmartin@cnss.org; or Joe Onek at jonek@rabengroup.com